

Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in NSW – Post-hearing response, 30 July 2024
ArtsandMusic@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Question:

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there any research on that, that you are aware of?

PENELOPE BENTON: There is a little bit of research that we've been a partner on recently called Visual Arts Work. I can share that with you following this. That looks at career pathways mostly for artists as academics and their trajectory into that type of teaching, so outside of the school system but in the universities and TAFEs.

Answer:

Visual Arts Work: sustainable strategies for the Australian visual arts and craft sector was an Australian Research Council Linkage project led by researchers from RMIT University and The University of Melbourne, and industry partners the National Association of the Visual Arts (NAVA), and the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA). The three-year project aimed to improve the economic, social and cultural standing of visual and craft artists and arts workers, and to strengthen the sustainability of the Australian visual art industry, by proposing practical interventions for the arts industry and government policy.

The project released seven papers which are available here
<https://www.visualartswork.net.au/research.html>

While the research and papers are not specifically on the career trajectory of visual arts teachers, academics and educators, there are references to this type of work in the findings:

MacNeill, K. Lye, J. Pandolfini, R. McQuilten, G. Badham, M. and Powell, C., June 2022 (draft) *Making Sense of Incomes in the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector (Discussion Paper)*, Visual Arts Work research project, RMIT University and The University of Melbourne.

https://www.visualartswork.net.au/uploads/1/3/9/3/139379831/macneill_et_al_june_2022_making_sense_of_incomes_in_the_visual_arts_sector.pdf

The most common type of arts work selected for those who were arts workers only was administration/management, whereas for those who were also visual artists it was educator/academic/teacher/public programming. p7

Further, those artists able to take advantage of visual arts teaching and learning opportunities experienced a positive influence on both their incomes and mental health. p2

Table 1: Summary Statistics Artists

12.6% Undertook visual arts teaching opportunities p9

Potential positive or unexpected impacts included developed online methods to present work; created digital art work; undertook visual arts learning opportunities and undertook visual arts teaching opportunities. p11

However, those living in Western Australia and those able to undertake visual arts teaching opportunities were less likely to experience a significant or extreme fall in income. This can perhaps be explained by the far lighter restrictions in that state throughout most of the pandemic. p12

However, developing online methods to present work and undertaking visual arts teaching opportunities seemed to offer some protection against a significant or extreme impact on mental health. p12

The Census data in Table 15 shows the high and increasing levels of post-school level education undertaken by Visual Arts and Craft Professionals; in 2016 71% reported having undertaken Post-School Education of any type, compared with 56% across the general Australian population aged 15 years and over. p18

Arts workers who were also artists were most likely to be engaged in educator/academic/teacher/public programming in their arts work. Thus, they are most likely to be working in the education sector and if at almost university were not eligible for the JobKeeper program. [Universities were typically not eligible due to the complexity of their status as they are partly government entities, partly for-profit businesses, partly not-for-profit businesses and partly charities (Hare 2021).] p19

Lye, J., Hirschberg, J., McQuilten, G., Powell, C., MacNeill, K., Badham, M., *The impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of Australian visual artists and arts workers, 2023. Australian Journal of Social Issues published by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd on behalf of Australian Social Policy Association.*

https://www.visualartswork.net.au/uploads/1/3/9/3/139379831/lye_et_al_2023_impact_of_covid_19_on_the_wellbeing.pdf

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Those able to take advantage of teaching and learning opportunities in the visual arts experienced a positive influence on both their incomes and mental health. p15

Those who identified primarily as artists and were also arts workers were most likely to be engaged in educator/academic/teacher/public programming in their arts work. Thus, they are most

likely to be working in the education sector, and those employed in the university sector were generally not eligible for the JobKeeper programme (Senate Select Committee, 2021). p15

Lye, J., Hirschberg, J., MacNeill, K., Powell, C., McQuilten, G., and Badham, M. (June 2023)
Insights into the hybrid and diverse incomes and career patterns of visual and craft artists.
Visual Arts Work research project, RMIT University and The University of Melbourne.

Policy Implication #4

An examination of the adequacy of incomes across the visual arts and craft sector (including part-time work in the education sector) is required to ensure that those who combine an art practice and arts work receive an adequate income. The gendered nature of the sector suggests that this examination needs also to consider whether gender segmentation is in part a contributor to lower incomes. p1

The visual and craft artists in our survey have high levels of education in their creative practice. 62.5% have a relevant undergraduate qualification and 35% have postgraduate qualifications. There is virtually no difference in undergraduate qualifications by gender; whereas a higher percentage of male artists have postgraduate qualifications. A large percentage participate in community and collective peer learning, with differences recorded across gender and career stage. Those identifying as female are more likely to be currently studying, participating in collective activity, community activities, peer learning and private classes or workshops. p11

The experience of those teaching in the visual and craft arts varies significantly, referenced as both a source of stability and as another area of job insecurity. One respondent noted that 'being employed as an academic in a permanent/ongoing position' contributed to their 'financial security'. But for others the financial security of teaching was not so straightforward:

While I do have casual employment as an arts educator, this is also only for 9 months of the year, and then I am unpaid for the other three months of the year. p31

Survey results indicate that arts workers are a highly educated workforce. As shown in Table 3, all arts workers had high levels of undergraduate and post-graduate education related to their arts work across both gender and career stage. This is much higher than the general population. In 2022, 32.1% of people aged 15-74 had a Bachelor degree or higher qualification, compared to 68.7% of arts workers surveyed for this research. On average, 8.3% of the general population had a Postgraduate degree as their highest qualification, seven times lower than arts workers at 59.8%. A large percentage of arts workers had also participated in collective and community activity in the sector. Only 1% of arts workers had no education and training at all related to their arts work. p11

Indeed, of the 40% of respondents who undertook work as an arts worker, many worked as arts educators (50.5% of arts workers) and arts professionals (35.4%). p31

MacNeill, K., Lye, L., McQuilten, G., Badham, M., Powell, C., *The Incomes of Visual Artists: Which Artists, What Income?* The Australian Economic Review published by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd on behalf of The University of Melbourne, Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, Faculty of Business and Economics.

Of particular interest is the fact that the level of education amongst visual artists and craft professionals is relatively high, yet, unlike other employment activity where education is a predictor of income, the correlation between earnings specifically derived from an artistic practice and level of education is relatively weak (Bille 2020, p. 50). However, educational level is a more robust predictor of income from non-artistic earnings, suggesting that some visual arts and crafts professionals may support an art practice through a relatively well-paid position in an occupation either within the arts sector or outside it. This highlights the need to reflect on the overall financial well-being of visual artists, acknowledging that for some a secondary source of income may be a desirable part of a portfolio of activities, producing a level of income which would otherwise not be attainable from an art practice. p564

Also see, **Throsby, D. and Petetskaya, K., May 2024. *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Department of Economics, Macquarie Business School Macquarie University, Creative Australia.**

<https://creative.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/artists-as-workers-an-economic-study-of-professional-artists-in-australia/>

The overwhelmingly most common form of arts- related work is teaching, mostly in the artist's own art form but occasionally crossing into another art form; on average 70 percent of artists across all art forms who are engaged in arts-related work do so through teaching. p6

More than a half of all artists have utilised their artistic skills in some other industry outside the arts, and 80 percent of these artists have generated some income from such activities. In most cases this sort of outside work involves applying artistic skills in education and research outside the arts, including teaching. p9

In comparison with the general workforce, artists are more highly educated, including when compared to other professionals and managers. The educational pathways that artists follow are many and varied. Some follow a relatively straight path by training at one or more tertiary institutions and on graduation commence their professional careers. Later, they may supplement their skills and knowledge with short courses and other types of training. On the other hand, some artists are self-taught, beginning their careers by plunging straight in or else by learning skills on the job, perhaps later deciding to undertake training to consolidate or extend their competencies or experience. p28

These data indicate that among visual artists and craft practitioners there is a strong emphasis on formal training in universities or in TAFE schools or independent art/craft teaching institutions p31 48% of visual artists and 54% of craft practitioners have received formal training. p32

A significant amount of arts-related work derives from teaching in the art form, work that is often remunerated via a wage/salary contract. p90